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SIPDIS

PLEASE PASS TO AF/S

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/06/2018

TAGS: PREL SF ZI

SUBJECT: SAG SENDS TEAM TO INVESTIGATE VIOLENCE IN ZIMBABWE

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Perry Ball. Reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) PolOff received identical readouts from Swedish and Irish diplomats who visited DFA Director: Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Tanzania Edward Xolisa Makaya separately on 06 May regarding the SAG's current position on Zimbabwe. Both diplomats said that they were told that the SAG has sent a team of retired military officers to Zimbabwe to investigate widespread reports of violence, and that the investigation, which will be carried out throughout the country, will take a few weeks. (NOTE: Australian Deputy High Commissioner Jane Lambert (protect) called PolOff on 5 May to inform her that Lambert's counterpart in Harare had run into a group of eight high-ranking South African military officers (General and Brigadier level) at the Miekles Hotel earlier that morning. According to Lambert, she was told it was obvious that they were not normal visitors to either Zimbabwe or the hotel. END NOTE)

¶2. (C) Both diplomats also said that Makaya tried to sell the idea of a government of national unity (GNU), though one diplomat pointed out that Makaya acknowledged that getting buy-in from ZANU-PF will be a hurdle. According to the Irish Ambassador (protect), Makaya acknowledged that ZANU-PF members who support Mugabe are not receptive to talk of a GNU. Makaya also told him in a roundabout way that these hardliners knew that President Mugabe was the only one who would keep them on and that they would likely not be included in a GNU.

¶3. (C) According to diplomats, Makaya had the following to say about international involvement in the Zimbabwean crisis:

-- MBEKI: When asked about Mbeki's current role, Makaya told the the Irish Ambassador that Mbeki is "respected by all sides" and is currently in contact with MDC representatives in Harare. (NOTE: MDC and diplomats have told PolOff over the past week that MDC has refused President Mbeki's calls. The Irish Ambassador was told by MDC that they actually sent a cell phone text message to President Mbeki not to call them anymore. END NOTE)

-- USG: Only the Irish Ambassador admitted that Makaya took the opportunity to lambast both the United States and United Kingdom, saying we were "particularly unhelpful." Makaya repeated themes that have appeared in the South African press over the past several days, namely that the U.S. is giving instructions to the MDC, but also that the "U.S. held up the demise of apartheid."

-- SADC: Makaya told both diplomats that SADC will send as many election observers as possible, but he also complained that financing for the SADC observer missions will

be the greatest hurdle.

-- AU: Makaya confirmed press reports that Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union Jean Ping visited President Mbeki over the weekend in Pretoria. However, unlike the media reports which speculated that Ping was in town to discuss a possible African-wide initiative, Makaya told the Irish Ambassador that Ping expressed concern about the current situation, but told the SAG that the AU's only initiative will be to support SADC.

¶4. COMMENT: The fact that the SAG has sent an investigation team is good news, but it also implies that the SAG is reluctant to believe what are now widespread, documented reports of violence from news agencies, NGOs, and other diplomatic missions. It is also discouraging to know that the team will conduct its investigation over the course of several weeks, at which time a runoff may be over. END COMMENT.

BALL